



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Dec. 24, 2002

Contact: Leslie Ridgeway (619) 685-2239
Wilma Wooten (619) 515-6519

HEALTH CARE WORKERS LEARN MORE ABOUT SMALLPOX VACCINATION

San Diego Health and Human Services educates potential volunteers about risks and benefits

Public and private health workers learned last week how to educate co-workers who may volunteer to receive smallpox vaccinations at three “train the trainer” sessions offered by the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency.

One hundred and sixty-four workers participated in the sessions, which were taught by staff from HHS Public Health Services on Dec. 18, 19 and 20. The sessions were intended to ensure potential volunteers have information about the risks and benefits of the vaccine so they can make an informed decision about volunteering.

“We anticipate that we will begin giving vaccinations to critical hospital health care workers in February, after the Homeland Security Bill, which provides liability protection, takes effect,” said Dr. Nancy Bowen, interim Public Health Officer. “However, we want to provide as much information to our workers as possible, because they have an important decision to make.” The bill is scheduled to take effect on Jan. 24.

The vaccine can cause serious side effects, but the disease is so devastating that officials, led by President Bush, decided to vaccinate health care workers who volunteer.

Additional training sessions for public health workers are planned for early January.

San Diego County has estimated it will need 3,300 doses of vaccine. The vaccine is under the control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

###